

REMARKS

The Applicant thanks the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 2 and 4 are cancelled. Claims 1 and 3 are pending. Claims 1 and 3 are amended. Claim 1 is independent. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner states that claim 4 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

The Applicant thanks the Examiner for the early indication of allowable subject matter in this application. In response, independent claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 4 and intervening claim 2.

Independent claim 1 is now in condition for allowance.

Drawings

It is respectfully requested that the Examiner indicate whether or not the drawings have been accepted in the next official communication.

Claim for Priority

The Examiner has acknowledged the Applicant's claim for foreign priority.

Information Disclosure Citation

The Applicant thanks the Examiner for considering the reference supplied with the Information Disclosure Statement filed on February 26, 2004, and for providing the Applicant with an initialed copy of the PTO-1449 form filed therewith.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 1-3 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Patterson et al. (U.S. 1,885,943) in view of Ewell (U.S. 2,593,284).

This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Amendments to Independent Claim 1

As noted above, and while not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to advance prosecution of the instant application, independent claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 4 and intervening claim 2.

At least for the reasons explained above, the Applicant respectfully submits that the combination of elements as set forth in independent claim 1 is not disclosed or made obvious by the prior art of record, including Patterson et al. (U.S. 1,885,943) and Ewell (U.S. 2,593,284).

Therefore, independent claim 1 is in condition for allowance.

Dependent Claims

The Examiner will note that dependent claims 2 and 4 have been cancelled, and dependent claim 3 has been amended.

Dependent claim 3 is in condition for allowance due to its dependency from allowable independent claim 1, or due to the additional novel features set forth therein.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, he is invited to telephone Carl T. Thomsen (Reg. No. 50,786) at (703) 208-4030 (direct line).

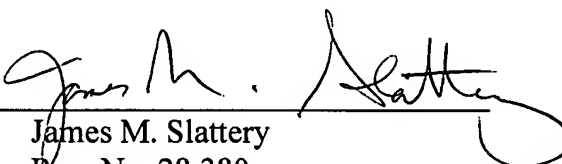
Application No. 10/786,131
Amendment dated January 26, 2007
Reply to Office Action of November 14, 2006


Docket No. 1131-0501P
Art Unit: 1731
Page 7 of 7

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

Date: January 26, 2007

Respectfully submitted,
BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

By 
James M. Slattery
Reg. No. 28,380

JMS:CTT:af 

P. O. Box 747
Falls Church, VA 22040-0747
(703) 205-8000